

# THE SAD YEARS

BY

DORA SIGERSON

(MRS. CLEMENT SHORTER)



LONDON

CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD.



Dore - Eigentum  
für den photographischen Verein Brüssel

KRISHNA  
SRI PRATAP GOEL  
SRINAGAR.

515

acc. no: 2440

First published . . . 1918.  
Second Impression 1918.  
Third " 1919.  
Reissued . . . 1921.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN.  
CHISWICK PRESS: CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND GRIGGS (PRINTERS), LTD.  
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

## NOTE

ALL the poems in this little volume were written after the beginning of the war. They were arranged for publication by the author shortly before her death, which took place on the sixth of January 1918.



# DORA SIGERSON

## A TRIBUTE AND SOME MEMORIES<sup>1</sup>

BY KATHARINE TYNAN

**T**O think of Dora Sigerson—and it is a poignant thought—takes one back to Dublin of the 'nineties, or the later 'eighties. I think it was on a summer Sunday in 1887 that Dr. Sigerson came to see me with his two daughters and Rose Kavanagh, whom I already knew. The Yeatses were there that Sunday for the big meal at a most unfashionable hour, which was a feature of those years for the young writers and artists of Dublin. My old home was in the country, just under the Dublin mountains, and, I think, a very delightful place.

Everyone, of course, knew Dr. Sigerson by repute. The house was full of the young that day, with just a sprinkling of the young of heart like Mr. Yeats and my father and Dr. Sigerson. I remember that my brother said to me, "Miss Sigerson is very beautiful." She was. Her face then

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from "The Observer" of 13 January 1918.

had some curious suggestion of the Greek Hermes. She wore her dark hair short, and it was in heavy masses. She had a beautiful brow and eyebrows, very fine grey eyes, a short straight nose, a warm pale colour, and vivid red lips. A little later the Irish-American, Miss Louise Imogen Guiney, dedicated her "Roadside Harp" to the Sigerson sisters:

There in the Druid brake,  
If the cuckoo be awake  
    Again, oh, take my rhyme,  
And keep it long for the sake  
    Of a bygone primrose-time.  
You of the star-bright head  
    That twilight thoughts sequester :  
You to your native fountains led,  
Like to a young Muse garlanded :  
    Dora, and Hester.

Dora was indeed "like to a young Muse garlanded." She was singularly beautiful, with some strange hint of storm in her young beauty. She was so full of artistic impulse and achievement of many kinds, and she arrived at so much of art without any apprenticeship that the word "genius" seems not inapplicable to her. Our friendship flowed straight on from that summer Sunday of 1887. Dr. Sigerson's house in Clare Street became my headquarters when I went into Dublin from my country home.

Dora was always painting or writing or doing sculpture. I can remember her coming from somewhere downstairs to the drawing-room at No. 3, Clare Street, when I was announced, wearing a sort of sculptor's blouse. There is still in her old home, crowded with beautiful things, at least one head by her of a nymph or a dryad, strangely delicate and pensive.

I don't think she had read much poetry till John O'Leary, saying her poetry was too introspective, gave her Percy's "Reliques," whence the genesis of her fine ballad poetry. If she had any training as an art student for her painting and drawing and sculpture, it must have been very slight. The gifts came to her out of the air, so to speak; real gifts and nothing acquired.

For seven good years my life was inextricably interwoven with hers and Hester's. We had the same friends, the same merry-makings, the same tastes and aims. We were of the circle which revolved around the great old Fenian, John O'Leary, and his not less noble sister; we visited the American poets, Mr. and Mrs. Piatt, at Queenstown, where Mr. Piatt was American Consul; we spent many happy days at Mr. Richard Ashe King's delightful house at Waltham Terrace, Blackrock. We wrote for the same papers. Presently Dora Sigerson and I were together

in politics, both Parnellites when the "split" came. Together we attended Mr. Parnell's meetings; we went to meet him when he returned to Dublin from the country; we lived through all the passionate loyalty of those days. Together we exulted; together we mourned; together we followed our chief to the grave, not thinking upon how she should one day lie near him.

Perhaps the best holiday we had together was a scamper through Donegal on some business about the industries for Lady Aberdeen. It was just before I was married. From the time we left Amiens Street Station till we returned it was all pure enjoyment. The people with their beautiful manners, the wonderful scenery, the hotels, the car-drivers, the priests, the little towns, the wild, lonely places, the great hospitality—all were a delight to her. She was full of the *joie de vivre*, despite the hint of tragedy in her beauty. She did madcap things. Like Martin Ross she could mimic animals perfectly. How we laughed when she crowed like a cock over a low wall beyond which was a poultry-yard, and the real Vizier, after one careful look around, marshalled all his ladies into an inner enclosure. I have somewhere a book of that tour with her delightfully humorous drawings. She was always pencil in hand. We did the whole of Donegal within a fortnight, and came back, blowzed but

happy, I to my wedding, she to the Dublin she always loved. A year or two later she met Clement Shorter at our little house in Mount Avenue, Ealing.

One thing I must not omit to mention—her passionate love of animals. In the old, good days in Dublin she used to pick up waifs and strays of forlorn doghood and take them to the Dogs' Home. The boys in the street used to shout derision at us: "Go on! wid yer grand hats and ye to be starvin' yer dog!" The sense of humour supported us.

How we laughed and lived together! Ah, well:

Let nothing disturb thee,  
Let nothing affright thee.  
  
All passes,  
Only God remaineth  
For ever and ever.

I will not speak of her beautiful poetry, essential poetry, always with a passionate emotion to give it wings. It is for the critic. No one will say she was not happy in her English life, though her heart was always slipping away like a grey bird to Ireland. She had a very full life and she had absolute devotion and knew what a precious thing she had.

Her breakdown in health was sudden. She attributed it herself to her intense and isolated suffering—isolated beyond the perfect sympathy of her devoted husband—over the

events following Easter week, 1916, in Dublin, and the troubles which menaced the country she adored. I think she need not have felt so bitterly isolated; the spirit of humanity is strong in the good English—and the good English are very good—but the fact remains that she broke her heart over it all; and so she died, as she would have chosen to die, for love of the Dark Rosaleen.

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE SAD YEARS . . . . .	1
PROGRESS: 1914-1918 . . . . .	3
OCTOBER 1915 . . . . .	6
THE QUESTION . . . . .	7
THE HUMAN TOUCH . . . . .	9
THE ROAD OF THE REFUGEES . . . . .	12
HEROD . . . . .	14
THE HOURS OF ILLNESS . . . . .	17
TO BID HER LIVE . . . . .	19
IF YOU SHOULD PASS . . . . .	21
THE TWO PRAYERS . . . . .	23
MOTHER . . . . .	25
FOR HE HAD GREAT POSSESSIONS . . . . .	27
THE SEA-MEW . . . . .	29
LOVES ME? LOVES ME NOT? . . . . .	30
THE SWALLOW . . . . .	32

	PAGE
THE SECRET . . . . .	34
I WANT TO TALK TO THEE . . . . .	35
COMFORT THE WOMEN . . . . .	37
THE SINKING SHIP . . . . .	40
NORA . . . . .	42
THE LOITERER . . . . .	43
THE PATCHWORK QUILT . . . . .	44
OURSELVES ALONE . . . . .	45
THE PRISONER . . . . .	47
SICK I AM AND SORROWFUL . . . . .	49
HOME . . . . .	51
I SAW CHILDREN PLAYING . . . . .	52
A STUDENT'S SONG . . . . .	54
THE TREE UPROOTED . . . . .	55
MIGRATORY BIRDS . . . . .	57
A FANTASY . . . . .	59
THE DEAD SOLDIER . . . . .	60
THE QUEEN . . . . .	62
THE SACRED FIRE . . . . .	64
THEY DID NOT SEE THY FACE . . . . .	65
THE WREATH . . . . .	67

## CONTENTS

xv

	PAGE
THE DEFENDERS . . . . .	68
A SONG FOR EVALEEN . . . . .	69
THE COMFORTERS . . . . .	71
THE BLACK HORSEMAN . . . . .	72
ON THE OTHER SIDE . . . . .	74
THE HOUSE OF CARDS . . . . .	76
THE PALACE GATE . . . . .	80
<u>AN OLD PROVERB</u> . . . . .	82



## THE SAD YEARS

THOU hast encompassed us, indeed, O Lord,  
With these sad years. Where does the failure lie  
Of this Thy man, made to Thy likeness, since  
Within the golden mirror of the sun  
Thou gavest Thy sweet loveliness and didst  
Then gather dust to mould him to Thy shape,  
And stood him upright on Thy holy palm  
To view his form and praise Thy handiwork?  
Is this Thy likeness then, Thy perfect mould,  
Thy hands, Thy feet, Thy voice, Thy sacred heart.  
A god in miniature, of Eden made?

Hands, hands, hands, tearing, grasping, slaying,  
Cold, stiff, still, soothing, strangling, praying.  
Feet, feet, feet, running, toiling, stamping,  
Crushing, killing, falling, stumbling, tramping.  
Cries, cries, cries, brutal, broken, wailing,  
Sobbing, helpless, anguished, dying, failing.

## THE SAD YEARS

Hearts, hearts, hearts, loving, hating, seeking,  
Hearts of all Thy children, breaking, breaking.

Is this, indeed, Thy man, that Thou hast made,  
Is this Thy likeness, and are these Thy ways?  
Oh, Lord of pity, quench these flaming hours,  
Restore to peace these sad and tortured years  
Wherein Thou breakest the frail heart of man  
—Or he the heart of God.

## PROGRESS: 1914-1918

"**L**O! I am athirst," said the brown earth,  
"**L** And I would drink my fill."

"Have I not slaked thee," cried the grey skies,  
"From river, stream, and rill?"

"I would have wine," said the hot earth,  
"Red wine from hearts afire."

"Lo! thou shalt arise," cried the fierce sun,  
"Clad in a new attire."

"My fruit abundant," said the fair earth,  
"As never seen before."

"Gladly shall I bear," cried the proud tree,  
"That ripe and luscious store."

"My cloth so radiant," said the vain earth,  
"Shall wrap me in its sheen."

"Deeply shall we weave," cried the slim grass,  
"In tender gold and green."

"Lo! I am athirst," said the hot earth,

"And I would quench my fears."

"Then thou shalt taste," cried the young maid,

"The bitter sweet of tears."

"Have I not held them," said the old earth,

"The dead unto my heart?"

"Under my white robe," cried the chill wind,

"So a new spring should start."

"Men must pale and die," said the black earth,

"So men may rise and live;"

"And I was born thus," cried the great town,

"In blood they slew to give."

"Grant to me red wine," said the brown earth,

"Else do I droop and tire."

"As in the great past," cried the pale hills,

"We drank of hearts afire."

"In war have I grown," said the fierce earth,

"Man against his brother."

"Death's sheaves have fed thee," said the green woods,

"Beast slaying one the other."

"I have built my state," said the proud earth,

"In strife and foul dissension;"

"Thy church uprising," cried the grey rocks,

"From blood and hot contention."

"Lo! I am athirst," sighed the brown earth,

"Grant me red wine to spend."

"As it was in the beginning," said the great hills,

"And shall be to the end."

OCTOBER, 1915

WHEN the white rose and the red spill their leaves  
upon the way,

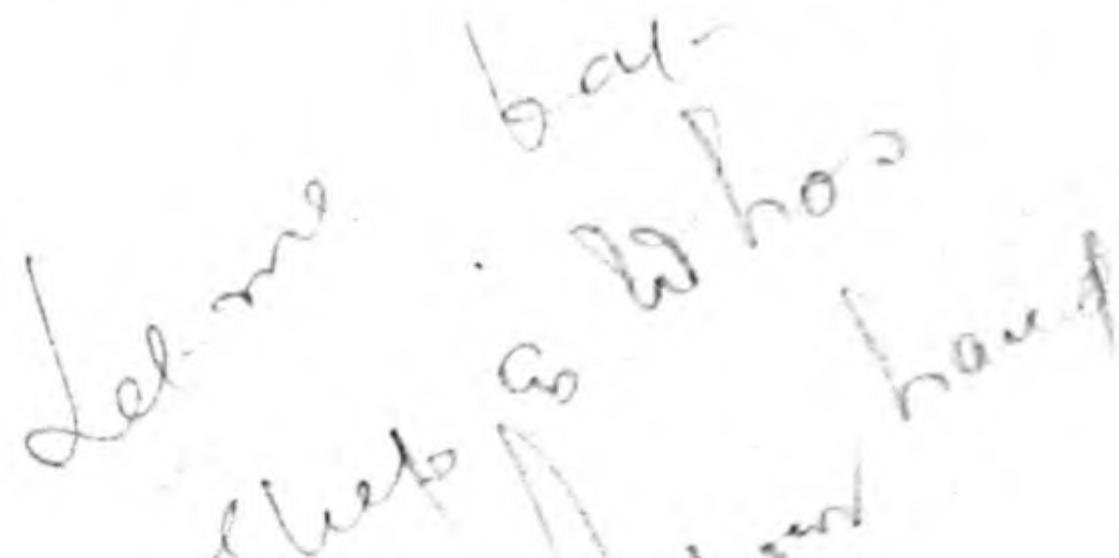
Make a scented path to tread through the long, sun-haunted  
day;

I half-dreaming all forget in the summer's idle grace,  
That the city's claim will come, bid me back into my place.

How can I go forth again to the hot and restless town,  
Where the stranger people pass ever careless up and down,  
Where convention chills each hand from a kind and friendly  
hold?

Here the robin to my call cheerful comes, alert and bold.

Summer with her pretty ways now is taking leave of me,  
Slow the ling'ring roses fall, softly sings the honey-bee,  
How can I go back again to the horrors of the town,  
Where the husky voice of war fiercely echoes up and down?



## THE QUESTION

**G**IVE me the heavy sleep, the dreamless slumber  
 Nor shrouded grief nor sorrow will encumber.  
 Let me but sleep as he whose labour-hand  
 Hath tilled the sod and ploughed the pleasant land,  
 But, God! to dream, to wake, and dream again,  
 Where screams red war in harvesting dead men.  
 Ah! dream of home, of love, of joy, all thrilling,  
 To wake once more to killing, killing, killing.

Give me the hunter's hand, the patriot's fervour  
 To hold death naught, or for my land to serve her,  
 Slay and still slay, with heart that holds no sorrow  
 For these dead men and all their carnal horror.  
 Was I not one who loved my land for growing  
 Sweet, eager life, and pretty things all blowing?  
 How glad these hands to give their toil, how willing,  
 That now, O God! grow strong in killing, killing.

I never see a young face grey in dying  
 But from my blade I hear a woman crying:

## THE QUESTION

"Spare, spare my child!" or screams my bullet, saying,  
"Stay, stay thy flight! My father thou art slaying."  
All summer through I heard from each pale sleeper,  
"Thou shalt not kill." "Am I my brother's keeper?"  
I fain replied. And now comes dread December,  
With "Peace on Earth." O God! dare I remember?  
"To men goodwill." Am I Thy laws fulfilling  
Who run red-handed—killing, killing, killing?

## THE HUMAN TOUCH

She made roses all the day for pretty ladies' wear,  
All through the patient hours, half into the night.  
Dragged into a hurried knot all her dusty hair,  
Eyes foolish with fatigue, straining to the light.

Pretty ladies roamed away over land and sea,  
Talked on foreign boulevard, laughed in gay bazaar:  
Followed summer's sunny road planning times to be,  
Happy hours of holiday, as the seasons are.

She made roses all the day for pretty ladies' wear,  
All through the long day, half into the night.  
Followed all the toiling hours with a dumb despair  
Lest they overtake her skill in their hurried flight.

Pretty ladies in the park driving up and down,  
Chatting of the horrid war, strolling on the grass,  
Shopping long in Regent Street, over cloak or gown,  
Waving hand or handkerchief as the soldiers pass.

She made roses all the day for pretty ladies' wear,  
Threepence for a dozen such, working to the night.  
Just an hour of holiday left her cupboard bare,  
She knew naught of Regent Street or of war's affright.

Sudden in a dusky hour came a stranger bird,  
To the frightened city's gloom, in her silent race  
Flew to drop her evil egg where the slow winds stirred  
Wrapping mist from some rich store for her nesting place.

But the pitying breath of night blowing from the west  
Blew the evil bird to go in the smoke and gloom,  
So that sudden death might bring for the toiler rest—  
Give her splendid liberty from her prison room.

She had never time to weep, dim eyes and holiday,  
Left her roses all unborn, left the cupboard bare.  
Now she cried and rising flung roses all away,  
Swift as any lady ran down the narrow stair.

All the pretty ladies prayed, with uplifted glance,  
Thanked God that each lovely life had not met its doom,  
She prayed in her prison place for the "lucky chance"  
That had saved her sweated life from the restful tomb.

Thanked God she made roses still for pretty ladies' wear,  
Threepence for a dozen such, working to the night.  
Dragged in to a hurried knot all her dusty hair—  
Eyes foolish with fatigue straining to the light.

## THE ROAD OF THE REFUGEES

**L**ISTEN to the tramping! Oh, God of pity, listen!  
 Can we kneel at prayer, sleep all unmolested,  
 While the echo thunders?—God of pity, listen!  
 Can we think of prayer—or sleep—so arrested?

Million upon million fleeing feet in passing  
 Trample down our prayers—trample down our sleeping;  
 How the patient roads groan beneath the massing  
 Of the feet in going, bleeding, running, creeping!

Clank of iron shoe, unshod hooves of cattle,  
 Pad of roaming hound, creak of wheel in turning,  
 Clank of dragging chain, harness ring and rattle,  
 Groan of breaking beam, crash of roof-tree burning.

Listen to the tramping!—God of love and pity!  
 Million upon million fleeing feet in passing  
 Driven by the war out of field and city,  
 How the sullen road echoes to the massing!

## THE ROAD OF THE REFUGEES

13

Little feet of children, running, leaping, lagging,  
Toiling feet of women, wounded, weary guiding,  
Slow feet of the aged, stumbling, halting, flagging,  
Strong feet of the men loud in passion striding.

Hear the lost feet straying, from the roadway slipping,  
They will walk no longer in this march appalling;  
Hear the sound of rain dripping, dripping, dripping,  
Is it rain or tears? What, O God, is falling?

Hear the flying feet! Lord of love and pity!  
Crushing down our prayers, tramping down our sleeping,  
Driven by the war out of field and city,  
Million upon million, running, bleeding, creeping.

## HEROD

*The Virgin speaks:*

DRAW back the starry curtains of the night,  
 O Cherubim, and Seraphim!  
 Pull back the purple curtains of the night,  
 For I would look once more upon the world,  
 That ere my sorrows made some young delight  
 In bird and bee and each earth-flower uncurled.

*Cherubim:* "Sancta Virgo Virginum."

Let me behold a garden rich with fruit,  
 The pomegranate in shade of cypress trees,  
 Vines and wild honey, and the small bees' lute,  
 Where aromatic spices fill the breeze.

*Seraphim:* "Virgo fidelis."

Let me behold again all unafraid,  
 Fair Bethlehem and grey Egyptian sands,  
 Let me but see the spreading cedar's shade  
 Where once I hid in half-forgotten lands.

*Cherubim:* "Mater amabilis."

Let me but watch the little goats that leap  
On the rough rocks that circle Galilee,  
And I would hear the swelling waves that creep  
To strike strong music from the changing sea.

*Seraphim:* "Mater admirabilis."

Draw back the purple curtain. I would find  
A people, then unborn, yet for whose sake  
I was most blessed amongst womankind,  
And bore God's son their heavy sins to take  
Upon himself, so He in anguish died,  
To teach them all to love and live in peace.  
Draw now the starry curtains well aside,  
And all the lights of Heaven swift release.

*Cherubim:* "Mater Christi."

What comes to me from far-off broken years?  
A voice in Rama, mourning her sad lot!  
Great lamentations, women's cries and tears,  
A Rachel mourns her children who were not.

*Seraphim:* "Consolatrix affictorum."

I hear again from out the singing spheres  
 A mother's scream, and all her whispered prayer  
 Stabbed by her anguish, faint beneath her fears,  
 I hide once more upon that far earth there.

*Cherubim:* "Regina Martyrum."

Draw close the starry curtains of the night  
 Lest Heaven fade and I forget to pray;  
 Here God is love, we hate nor suffer fight,  
 What Herod lives upon the earth to-day?

*Cherubim:* "Da pacem, Domine, sustinentibus te,  
 ut Prophetae tui fideles inveniantur."

*Seraphim:* "Pacem relinquo vobis, pacem  
 meam do vobis, dicit Dominus."

• *Cherubim and Seraphim:* Alleluia.

## THE HOURS OF ILLNESS

**H**OW slow creeps time! I hear the midnight chime,  
 And now late revellers prepare for sleep;  
 A last gay voice rings in a passing rhyme,  
 And past my door the anxious footsteps creep.

The little clocks from hidden places call  
 'Tis one o'clock; downstairs the big clock's bell  
 Tolls deep, and then comes forth the merry chime,  
 Like laughing children calling, "All is well!"

'Tis two o'clock! Why in the lonesome room  
 This creak and crack, if there be no one here?  
 Whose feet disturb the loose board of the floor?  
 Whose secret presence fills the dark with fear?

Tis three o'clock! O God, when comes sweet rest?  
 To sleep, to sleep, within this sleeping house,  
 Where all could wake with less fatigue than I,  
 Where no one stirs save some adventurous mouse!

'Tis four o'clock! Death stands at my bed-head  
In meditation deep, with hidden face,  
And I alone—a coward—alone, afraid,  
Lest he from his dread brow the shroud displace.

'Tis five o'clock! Within the empty room,  
Threading their way, the happy dead appear,  
More living than the quick in this still night—  
All whom I loved or held me ever dear.

'Tis six o'clock! Death moves from my bed-head,  
Flings high the shroud from off his hidden face.  
"O gentle death! O fair and lovely shade,  
Lift this sad spirit from its dwelling-place!"

The clock at seven! Hear the milkman come.  
Lead clangs the gate; the room is chill and dark.  
The maid, reluctant rising, frees the door;  
A dog runs forth with shrill, offensive bark.

The clock strikes eight! The curtains pulled aside  
Let in the light, so cold, so bleak, so grey.  
From their dark hiding come familiar things,  
And through my window looks another day.

## TO BID HER LIVE

B RING to her spring flowers,  
Cowslip and celandine,  
And bid her hear the blackbird's song.  
Let pass the sunny hours  
In her dull room to shine,  
Lay cherry blossom her thin arm along.

Bring all the sweets of June,  
Pale viola and rue,  
Garlands of fragrant roses, pink and white.  
The young birds' broken tune,  
The larkspur gold and blue,  
Let in the gentle harping of the night.

When russet autumn comes,  
Lad's-love and lavender  
Fling on her bed. Go, shake red apples down,  
Sun-kissed and purple plums,  
The sweet and luscious pear,  
Bring her on leaves of crimson, green, and brown.

## TO BID HER LIVE

When comes the winter snow,  
Then close the shutters tight  
To hide the falling leaves and stricken tree,  
The silent birds that go,  
Through cold and cheerless light,  
And winter's shroud on all life's liberty.

Bear her the holly bough,  
And on the glowing hearth  
Let twisted flame and rebel fires roar.  
Bid laughing children now  
Dance round her in their mirth,  
And call her fainting spirit home once more—  
Oh, call her, call her, call her home once more!

## IF YOU SHOULD PASS

If by my tomb some day you careless pass,  
A moment grieved by coming on my name,  
Ah! kneel awhile upon the tender grass  
In some short prayer acquitting me of blame.

If I reached not your pinnacle of right,  
Or fell below your standard of desire,  
If to my heart alone my hopes were white,  
And my soul built its own celestial fire,

Then let your grief, be it a single tear,  
Upon your cheek in tender sorrow fall,  
Forget where I did fail; keep only dear  
The deeds for which you loved me over all.

For ah! to hear, poor shade from life shut out,  
Unkindly tongues to trifle with my name,  
So that remembrance came half-chilled with doubt  
In conversations less of praise than blame.

## IF YOU SHOULD PASS

For if thy charity be overstrained  
And would bring slander where it cannot bless,  
Give me but silence where good friendship waned,  
Grant me the mercy of forgetfulness.

## THE TWO PRAYERS

**L**ORD! when they came and stood upon my way,  
**L** With "One is dead," I paused awhile to pray,  
 In brief thanksgiving that I still did live  
 On the good earth that had so much to give.  
 Through my sweet garden softly did I go  
 To lift some lily's head that hung too low,  
 Or bind a rebel rose that sought to stray  
 Across my path. More dear were they to-day  
 When I did live who might as he be dead.  
 "Was ever world so fair," I whisp'ring said.  
 "Thank God for eyes, for ears, for strength, for breath,  
 All that he hath not who hath tasted death."

But when they went in silence, to my heart  
 Their pity pierced. Then came the poisoned dart,  
 With "He is dead." I flung me low to pray.  
 "Lord, I have watched through the uncertain day  
 When he was far, and ev'ry throbbing hour,  
 Half lost in fear the joy of bird or flower.

## THE TWO PRAYERS

And new alarm I found did some sharp cry  
Come from the street, or did a foot pass by  
Swift in its going. All did threaten him.  
Hear me, O Lord, who sip at sorrow's brim.  
Take thou these eyes, these ears, this strength, this breath.  
All that he hath not, who hath tasted death."

## MOTHER

If I should rise amidst the assembled dead,  
Calling for thee, whose fond hands often led  
Me in young years, in that far unknown place  
To help me there, and could not find thy face!

If thou wouldst find that mother who was free  
To call thee hers, as I have need of thee;  
Or I stood lost, all fear and dread amaze,  
On death's great plains and solitary ways!

Ah, no, ah, no, less child than mother thou!  
Have I not seen those gentle eyes, that brow,  
Bent o'er me hours less grievous than to-day,  
When on some childhood's bed I fevered lay?

Couldst thou behold me sad and full of tears  
For those I left, nor chide my lonesome fears  
With the old smile on thy remembered face,  
Holding me, wearied so from life's hard race?

Safe in this thought, I give myself to sleep—  
Sleep that may wake from slumber yet more deep,  
So when I rise from all death's dread alarms,  
I see thy face and find my mother's arms.

## FOR HE HAD GREAT POSSESSIONS

AND I had died before the spring had come,  
 When winter's kiss upon the fields was cold,  
 And no small seed had broken up the land,  
 Then had I died, whose earthly hours were told.

I should have liked to see the snowdrop rise,  
 And pressed my lips upon the primrose bowl,  
 To see the thousand spear-heads of new grass,  
 But death had called to my half-willing soul.

And as I passed there came the sound of tears,  
 Disturbing me and dropping o'er my face;  
 I could not plead for mercy from their grief  
 With "Stay thy tears that chill my resting-place."

But I returned, in pity for their lot,  
 Stood by my bed to see my kindred there;  
 About my house I heard their footsteps go,  
 Finding my goods and seeking each his share.

My desk, my shelf, my very roof-tree's shade  
They sought for long, and o'er my lands did stray,  
And then returned and by my corpse knelt down  
With folded hands to murmur, "Let us pray."

And as they bent by the mysterious dead,  
Naked of all, from all possessions free,  
I saw each face—and went new worlds to meet,  
For what was I to them, or they to me?

## THE SEA-MEW

**I**HAD loved the pretty birds that by my window sung—  
 The gentle thrush that had his nest the perfumed  
 pines among;

The chaffinch with his sudden note, his song so clear and bold;  
 The sad rhyme of the robin, too, that came when winds  
 grew cold;

The happy lark whose benison fell from the sunny sky;  
 The blackbird with his golden lute that serenaded by:  
 The nightingale that through the night told his low rosary;  
 The finches, with their little tunes, were all beloved by me.

I leaned to hear each lovely note through each enchanted day!  
 And thought no minstrelsy so fine, while all content I lay,  
 When to my ear, across the sky, I heard a sea-bird's scream,  
 And, flapping slow across the blue, I saw him flash and  
 gleam.

I cared not then for singing birds, I loved the sun no more.  
 I heard the plashing of the waves upon a far-off shore,  
 And lonely, lonely cried my heart in answer to its call—  
 Ah, best I held the sea-mew's note that had no song at all!

## LOVES ME? LOVES ME NOT?

I SHALL rest no more on the fragrant mosses  
 Under great trees where the green bough tosses  
 Scents of the lime; and the wild rose flinging  
 Sweets to the breeze with their censer swinging,  
 I shall count no more, as I linger lazy  
 Deep in the mead, from the pink-tipped daisy,  
 "Who loves me well, and who leaves me lonely?  
 Who loves me not, and who loves me only?"

I shall walk no more by the great sea dreaming  
 Secret dreams, with the black gull screaming,  
 Child of the cliff and the wan wave falling,  
 Songless he cries with no bird-like calling.  
 I shall seek no more for the sea-shell's story  
 By the wet sands in the sunset glory,  
 Hear the sea call from the spiral hollow,  
 "Soul who is seeking, dare you not follow?"

Whom have I loved, and who loved me only?  
 I shall stand in the churchyard lonely,

And see the tombs of the dear departed,  
Read of the love of the broken-hearted  
Writ on the stones how they loved them only,  
Who loved them well and who left them lonely?  
Yea! I shall see all the cold white faces  
Lying so still in their secret places.

Under the earth goes the last new-comer,  
What were the life of her, winter-summer!  
What if her silent grave holds one only  
Who loved her well, and who left her lonely?

## THE SWALLOW

**H**OW I hate the sparrows, the sparrows, the sparrows.  
 In and out and round the house all the live-long  
 day,

Chirping shrill and fussy birds, with their silly petty minds,  
 Chittering and chattering, yet having naught to say.

How I love the swallows, the swallows, the swallows,  
 Coming from a far land of minaret and dome.

I have got a small room, like a clinging cosy nest,  
 Built upon the gable-end of my country home.

On its wall the swallows house, who can find its secret door?  
 Such a cunning nursery, made with Eastern art.  
 I can hear the baby ones, in their first, swift, troubled flight,  
 Giving little frightened cries as they swoop and dart.

And I hear the swallow-folk telling tales of foreign climes,  
 In a low sweet lullaby long before the day.  
 Little brothers of the wind, children of the summer time,  
 Lovers of the summer sky, swift you fly away!

I will dream the lone long hours, sick sad days, and weary nights;

If I should grow well again I will follow too,  
See their distant happy homes, built with their strange  
Eastern art;

I shall seek but smiling lands, skies forever blue.

And when swallows come again over all the changing sea,  
Back to where their empty nests still do cling and stay,  
I shall have a cabin, too, hidden 'neath its golden thatch,  
Snow-white on a mountain side, built of Irish clay. . .

I will leave the sparrows here, all the silly noisy birds,  
In and out and round the home all the live-long day,  
Chirping shrill and fussy ones, with their shallow sparrow  
minds,  
Chittering and chattering, yet having naught to say.

## THE SECRET

I KNOW of a thrush's nest, a pretty nest, a cosy nest,  
I know of a thrush's nest with three fine eggs of blue;  
It is in the perfumed pine, the tasselled pine, the swaying  
pine,

It is in the cool dark wood that I have wandered through.

I know of a speckled trout, a noble trout, a shining trout,  
I know of a splendid trout, the biggest I have seen;  
It is by the lonely mill, the silent mill, the old spade mill,  
It is in the running brook, for I did look and lean.

I know of a pretty maid, a laughing maid, a happy maid,  
I know of a darling maid, oh, sweet she is and fair;  
She waits in a garden bower, a rosy bower, a hidden bower,  
What the way to this dear maid—is neither here nor  
there!

## I WANT TO TALK TO THEE

I WANT to talk to thee of many things  
Or sit in silence when the robin sings  
His little song, when comes the winter bleak  
I want to sit beside thee, cheek by cheek.

I want to hear thy voice my name repeat,  
To fill my heart with echoes ever sweet;  
I want to hear thy love come calling me,  
I want to seek and find but thee, but thee.

I want to talk to thee of little things  
So fond, so frail, so foolish that one clings  
To keep them ours—who could but understand  
A joy in speaking them, thus hand in hand

Beside the fire; our joys, our hopes, our fears,  
Our secret laughter, or unhidden tears;  
Each day old dreams come back with beating wings,  
I want to speak of these forgotten things.

## I WANT TO TALK TO THEE

I want to feel thy arms around me pressed,  
To hide my weeping eyes upon thy breast;  
I want thy strength to hold and comfort me  
For all the grief I had in losing thee.

## COMFORT THE WOMEN

## A PRAYER IN TIME OF WAR

**W**HENCE comes the rain that ceaselessly doth fall,  
And seems to hold the bitter taste of tears?

Is it the lonely sorrow of the night  
Where patient women shed their hopes and fears?

Where mothers' hearts, that are too brave to break,  
Cry in the silence what they hid by day;  
As from the tear-drenched pillow they arise,  
Proud with the dawn, and shut their grief away?

Whence comes the rain? Is it from Angel eyes  
That from the neutral plains of Heaven gaze  
Upon this tortured earth? They hear us pray,  
And see our strife, in pity and amaze;

Calling on Him, again so crucified,  
In divers tongues each righteous cause to care;  
Rage unto rage, hate unto hate, doth shake  
The doors of Heaven with its impotent prayer.

And shall my cry be heard, that calls so faint,  
Through scream of shell and mighty cannon's roar,  
Through thunder of the voices that appeal  
For His protection at God's closed door?

"Comfort the women, Lord, my neutral prayer  
May reach Thy pity where those others fail;  
Comfort the women in these warring lands  
Who through the battles go, helpless and frail."

Dim are their eyes that watch the marching past  
Of all the splendid manhood and strong youth,  
Breaking their hearts, who are so proudly still  
Lest their beloved should suffer at the truth.

'Twas not for this barbarity of war  
The mother breathless hung by the small cot  
That held her man-child, fearing lest a wind  
Would blow too chill, or sun would shine too hot.

Or stayed her swifter feet so he might run  
Not lost behind, and with all gentle hand  
Holding him hers, who now has left her lone.  
Comfort the mothers, Lord, through each sad land.

Protect the women—they so helpless slain  
By each sharp sword that strikes a dear one down,  
Who on the battlefield in spirit go  
Without the war's red splendour or renown.

Lord, 'mid this discord of Thy Christian world,  
'Mid the loud praying of men's hopes and fears,  
Comfort the women, let this cry be heard,  
For Thou hast known a human mother's tears.

## THE SINKING SHIP

THE ship is sinking, come ye one and all.  
Stand fast and so this weakness over haul,  
Come ye strong hands and cheery voices call,  
"Stand by!"

The ship is sinking in a summer sea,  
Bless her but once for all she used to be,  
Who rode the billows once so proud and free,  
If you but loved a little, with a sigh,  
"Stand by!"

Gone, all are gone, they neither hear or care,  
The sun shines on and life is ever fair.  
They shun the struggle, laughter lurks elsewhere.  
The ship is sinking, passing echoes cry,  
"Stand by!"

The little ships that pass her in the night,  
Speed from the darkness in their eager fright.  
From troubled dreams they take refuge in flight.  
Why should they then, who know they too must die,  
"Stand by"?

## THE SINKING SHIP

41

Then get you gone, desert the sinking ship,  
O faithless friends, who on her pleasure-trip  
Clung close with gentle words and smiling lip,  
And still as ever on your own joys cry,  
“Stand by!”

The ship is sinking, parting in a smile,  
The sunset waters mark the last sad mile  
In dimpling play and in a little while  
The waters close, Death and his angels cry,  
“Stand by!”

## NORA

WITHIN an English village yesterday  
I came upon a little child at play.  
I lingered by to watch the baby game,  
And heard some voice call gently on her name.

Sweet she replied. How leaped my heart to hear  
The pretty notes, the accent ever dear,  
Shy as the wind soft singing from the South!  
I, hungry, kissed the brogue upon her mouth.

## THE LOITERER

**W**HEN Youth, led on by love and folly, strays,  
 Kissing sweet eyes beyond the allotted hour  
 That he should turn to labour and forget  
 Beyond his window beauty breaks to flower,

**O** greybeard, pause before thy anger strikes  
 Those joyful moments from his happy face.  
 They make a glory of his sullen task  
 And turn his workshop to a godly place.

Thou couldst not scold if by thy window wide  
 A mating thrush his love-song softly sung,  
 And the green horn of Spring blew Summer airs  
 That once thou chorused well when thou wert young.

Then, greybeard, chase the frown from off thy brow,  
 Since Time, alas! will soon belabour him;  
 And think what would become of joyous Spring  
 Were hoary Winter to be always grim.

## THE PATCHWORK QUILT

B RING to me white roses, roses, pinks, and lavender,  
Sweet stock and gillyflowers, poppies mauve and red,  
Bee-flowers and mignonette, with blue forget-me-not—  
I would make a coverlet for my narrow bed.

Bring me no silken cloth, velvet sheen or satin shine,  
Gossamer of woven lace, gold and silver thread,  
Purple deep and dove, and grey, through my idle fingers  
fall,  
Bidding me in patient hours make a patchwork spread.

Since I must go forth alone, far beyond the roof-tree's shade,  
Out into the open soon lonely there to lie,  
What want I of silken cloth woven by the hands of men?  
Time would soon despoil me there as he passed me by.

Bring to me white roses then, roses, pinks and lavender,  
Sweet stock and gillyflowers, poppies gold and red,  
Bee-flowers and mignonette and blue forget-me-not,  
So I have a coverlet for my narrow bed.

## OURSELVES ALONE

ONE morning, when dreaming in deep meditation,  
 I met a sweet colleen a-making her moan.  
 With sighing and sobbing she cried and lamented:  
 "Oh where is my lost one, and where has he flown?"

My house it is small, and my field is but little,  
 Yet round flew my wheel as I sat in the sun.  
 He crossed the deep sea and went forth for my battle:  
 Oh, has he proved faithless – the fight is not won?

And then I said: "Kathleen, ah! do you remember  
 When you were a queen, and your castles were strong,  
 You cried for the love of a cold-hearted stranger,  
 And in your fair island you planted the wrong?"

"And oh," I cried, "Kathleen, I once heard you weeping  
 And sighing and sobbing and making your moan.  
 You sang of a lost one, a dear one, a false one—  
 'Oh, gone is my blackbird, and where has he flown?'

" Ah! many came forth to the sound of your crying,  
And fought down the years for the freedom you pined.  
How many lie still, in their cold exile sleeping,  
Who sought in far lands your lost blackbird to find?

" And many are caught in the net of the stranger—  
Have all but forgotten the sound of your name,  
For other loves call them to help and to save them!  
They fell to dishonour—we hold them in shame.

" Oh, why drive me forth from your hearth into exile  
And into far dangers? Your house is my own.  
Faithful I serve, as I ever did serve you,  
Standing together, ourselves—and alone."

## THE PRISONER

ALL day I lie beneath the great pine tree,  
Whose perfumed branches wave and shadow me,  
I hear the groaning of its straining heart  
As in the breeze its thin leaves meet and part  
Like frantic fingers loosened and entwined,  
I hear it whisper to the sighing wind,  
“What of the mountain peaks, where I was born?”  
As sharp tears drop I feel its falling thorn.

I see in the far clouds the wild geese fly,  
Homeward once more, free, in the storm-swept sky.  
Back to the land they loved, all, all, have gone,  
How swift the flight by joy and hope led on.  
“What of the mountain land where I was born?”  
I cry, they pass, glad in the dawning morn,  
Home to the moon-pale lake, the heath-clad hill,  
And give no thought for one imprisoned still.

## THE PRISONER

All day I lie beneath the sad pine tree,  
Whose groaning branches wave and shadow me,  
Chained to the earth, the dark clay of the grave,  
In helpless passion feel its wild heart rave,  
"Free, set me free," I hear its moaning breath,  
Where liberty means nought, alas, but death.  
Ah, freedom is but death.

## SICK I AM AND SORROWFUL

**S**ICK I am and sorrowful, how can I be well again  
 Here, where fog and darkness are, and big guns  
 boom all day,

Practising for evil sport? If you speak humanity,  
 Hatred comes into each face, and so you cease to pray.

How I dread the sound of guns, hate the bark of musketry,  
 Since the friends I loved are dead, all stricken by the  
 sword.

Full of anger is my heart, full of rage and misery;  
 How can I grow well again, or be my peace restored?

If I were in Glenmalure, or in Enniskerry now,  
 Hearing of the coming spring in the pine-tree's song;  
 If I woke on Arran Strand, dreamt me on the cliffs of Moher,  
 Could I not grow gay again, should I not be strong?

If I stood with eager heart on the heights of Carrantuohill,  
 Beaten by the four great winds into hope and joy again,  
 Far above the cannons' roar or the scream of musketry,  
 If I heard the four great seas, what were weariness or pain?

## SICK I AM AND SORROWFUL

Were I in a little town, Ballybunnion, Ballybrack,  
Laughing with the children there, I would sing and dance  
once more,  
Hear again the storm clouds roll hanging over Lugnaquilla,  
Build dream castles from the sands of Killiney's golden  
shore.

If I saw the wild geese fly over the dark lakes of Kerry  
Or could hear the secret winds, I could kneel and pray.  
But 'tis sick I am and grieving, how can I be well again  
Here, where fear and sorrow are—my heart so far away?

## HOME

I WANT to go to the heather hills,  
To the heather hills and rocky shore.  
I want to climb to Ben-Edar's heights,  
And to smell the sea once more.

I want to talk by an Ulster hearth,  
Where welcome ever a stranger finds,  
I want to stand on a Connaught hill,  
And sing to the four great winds.

I want to see on a Kerry moor  
The purple turf smoke, coil, and soar,  
I want to hear a soft Munster voice  
That sings by a cottage door.

I want to go to the Leinster hills,  
To the Dublin hills by the rocky shore.  
I want to climb to Ben-Edar's heights—  
I want to be home once more.

## I SAW CHILDREN PLAYING

I SAW children playing, dancing in a ring,  
 Till a voice came calling, calling one away;  
 With sad backward glances she went loitering,  
 Hoping they would miss her and so cease to play.

Pettishly and pouting, " 'Tis not time to sleep."

Sobbing and protesting, slowly she did go;  
 But her merry comrades they all run and leap,  
 Feeling not her absence, heeding not her woe.

So as I went chatting through the city's hum,  
 With my old companions laughing on the way,  
 Came a voice low calling, calling me to come  
 To my lonely sleeping, leaving work and play.

With sad, mournful glances do I look to see  
 If a heart should loving pause and turn aside  
 From the happy circles and then come to me,  
 Sighing, " Do not leave us—still with us abide."

## I SAW CHILDREN PLAYING

53

No! they still are playing, chatting in a ring,  
Eager voices seeking other games to know.  
Lone I go protesting—hear them laugh and sing,  
Feeling not my absence, heeding not my woe.

## A STUDENT'S SONG

*Air. Wrap me up in my old stable jacket.*

WHEN I was a merry young fellow  
 I loved the red juice of the grape.  
 I would drink till I grew gay and mellow,  
 From Morpheus I could not escape.

I would give myself freely to slumber  
 Nor feared to go lonely to sleep,  
 I was lost for dark hours without number  
 My soul to oblivion would creep.

Then why do I now shake and tremble  
 As death comes to bid me lie still,  
 In a silence that sleep doth resemble  
 Who sought such a slumber at will?

Then death be your cup but the stronger,  
 For why should I fear me to sleep?  
 For I shall but slumber the longer  
 And drink but a little more deep.

## THE TREE UPROOTED

THE earth-bound giant now is free, is free;  
 The last fight over, and the last moan still;  
 No tale of snow-clad heights where great dreams be,  
 His exile heart can thrill.

Ah, how he cried with groaning branch and bough!  
 For that far land beyond the sunshine morn,  
 For that lost joy tilled earth will not allow,  
 That land where he was born.

Ah! how his heart that fought for freedom pined;  
 His leaves, like restless fingers, tried to hold  
 The trailing garments of the passing wind,  
 His struggle manifold.

The four winds heard and strove with mighty hands  
 To bear him back to that far northern height  
 Where he was born; loosed from his earthly bands,  
 He poised, a moment's flight.

## THE TREE UPROOTED

Then to the wind in passionate embrace  
His branches moved—out sung his parting breath.  
He leaned to freedom from his prison place,  
Whose freedom was but death.

Better so lie, from this dire bondage free,  
O heart who knew the silence of the snows!  
Than stand alone, O solitary tree,  
Where English greenwood grows.

Better to die than live in dull disgrace,  
O soul that dreamed the glory of the dream!  
To be for sparrows but a resting place,  
Who heard the eagle scream.

## MIGRATORY BIRDS

I HAVE listened for the beat  
    Of slow wings across the sea.  
In their strange and dumb retreat  
    From their foreign liberty.

Come the birds from northern lands,  
    Where the Russian sleigh-bells chime,  
From the hungry desert sands  
    Of a southern clime.

Come the birds where Eastern air,  
    Pierced by lofty minaret,  
Echoes far the Turkish prayer  
    Of a God we half forgot.

In my garden I have strayed  
    Through the warm sweet days of Spring,  
Bent to each small nest, delayed  
    By the young birds' fluttering.

To the soft, song-laden wind  
Leant in hope and half in fear,  
One low perfect note to find  
In the joyous tumult here.

There's no bird upon the wing,  
There's no fledgeling in the nest,  
There's no song where others sing  
More glorious than the rest.

Is he caged without release  
Who makes all lovely things to be?  
What holds the gentle bird of Peace,  
God's hand, or human frailty?

## A FANTASY

I SAW Winter 'neath a spindle tree,  
She plucked berries bright to crown her head.  
She was singing little robin's song  
While wild beech-leaves round and round her spread.

I ran home into my little house,  
Pulled to the shutters, barred up the door;  
I knelt down to blow the fire to flame,  
Great dark shadows danced upon the floor.

Long-legged shadows came from corners drear,  
Leaped up white walls, fell, and climbed again.  
I hear North Wind pushing at the gate,  
I won't open, not for wind or rain.

Oh, run home, wee ones, lest the whirling leaves  
Take ye far away, fairy folk to see.  
Crowning her dark hair with berries red  
I saw Winter 'neath a spindle tree.

## THE DEAD SOLDIER

*Where the sword has opened the way the man can follow.*

"**L**OOK! they come, the triumphant army!  
**L**Over yon hill see their weapons peeping."  
 Still I spoke not, but my wheel sent turning;  
 I closed my eyes, for my heart was weeping,  
 My heart was weeping for a dead soldier.

"Who is he who looks towards me?"  
 "'Tis no man, but a gay flag flying."  
 Red was his mouth and his white brow thoughtful,  
 Blue his eyes—how my soul is crying,  
 My soul is crying for a dead soldier.

"Kneel ye down, lest your eyes should dare them.  
 Kneel ye down and your beads be saying."  
 "Lord, on their heads Thy wrath deliver."  
 This is the prayer that my lips are praying,  
 My heart is praying for a dead soldier.

" Best cheer the path of the men victorious,  
For he is dead and his blade lies broken.  
His march is far where no aid can follow,  
And for his people he left no token;  
He left no token, the dead soldier."

The way of the sword a man can follow,  
See the young child with his gold hair gleaming.  
When falls the oak must the acorn perish?  
He lifts the blade and his eyes are dreaming;  
He dreams the dream of the dead soldier.

## THE QUEEN

I SAW her many years ago, my gladness and my grief.  
She stood amongst the barley fields to bind the wayward sheaf.

She walked upon the mountain's side to draw the brown turf home,

She planted many famine crops within the peaty loam.  
From rugged rocks and silver shore she gathered grey sloakeen.

She made the green earth brown again, and made the brown earth green.

She wearied in those striving years from morning until night.

Her fields grew wide, her stately home shone in the morning light.

But oh, those hours of yesterday, mo storeen and mo crie,  
I saw her turn her face away to hide her grief from me.

I flew to her a while ago, my thousand joys—so dear;  
For ruin fell upon her house and I was full of fear.

I saw wild fury seize her home, I heard a red wind scream,  
I saw the groaning roof-tree fall, the flame on wall and beam.  
I fell upon the broken way, struck down by chill despair:  
" My life's long love, my only joy, my dear beyond compare,  
A thousand souls will bleed with mine, a thousand hearts  
expire,

To see so fair a form as thine upon a martyr's fire."

From out the glow, from out the flame, from ruin fierce and  
wild,

I saw her come with dancing feet and glad face like a child,  
Her red-gold hair, her snow-white brow, her gown of silken  
green:

Out through the ruins of her home, she walked as would a  
queen.

Ni Houlihan, Ni Houlihan, she came a splendid queen.

## THE SACRED FIRE

THEY lit a fire within their land that long was ashes cold,

With splendid dreams they made it glow, threw in their hearts of gold.

They saw thy slowly paling cheek and knew thy failing breath,

They bade thee live once more, Kathleen, who went so nigh to death.

And who dare quench the sacred fire, and who dare give them blame,

Since he who draws too near the glow shall break into a flame?

They lit a beacon in their land, built of the souls of men,  
To make thee warm once more, Kathleen, to bid thee live again.

## THEY DID NOT SEE THY FACE

SOME on the pleasant hillside have thought they saw  
 thee pass,  
 As flings a cloud before the sun a shadow on the grass.  
 They praised thy fairness and held dear thy meekness and  
 thy grace;  
 They only saw thy shade, Kathleen, they did not see thy  
 face.

Some on the purple mountains stood to see thee speeding by,  
 As glides a sudden golden shaft across the stormy sky;  
 And these were braggarts of their love within thy dwelling-  
 place;

They saw thy beauty, Rosin Dubh, they did not see thy face.

But some in flames of battle strove their slender weight to  
 throw

Against the bayonet and the gun that hid thy only foe;  
 They left for thee their earthly loves, these heroes of thy  
 race,

And died, as all must die, Kathleen, who once have seen  
 thy face.

So must thy grief be ever new who holds a love like this,  
That thrusts away a dear one's heart, a little child's soft kiss,  
That leaves behind an honoured home, a Mother's fond  
embrace,

Till others seek again, Kathleen, to see thy hidden face.

## THE WREATH

EASTER, 1917

HERE on my path by some hard fate struck down,  
When life at last held out full hands to me.  
When the great dreams of younger years awoke  
And dear dead voices whispered "Liberty."  
Ah, cruel blow, from which I stricken rise  
And blindly stagger for that path again,  
To wonder if 'tis worth the striving now,  
Thus robbed upon life's highway and half slain.

Here I awoke to fear again the dead,  
Whose tender faces held me as I slept.  
Ah, well I knew who leaned above me there,  
Into whose arms so pitiful I crept.  
And I awoke, for Spring did cry "Arise!  
For birds within the green woods carol clear."  
Then Easter came with wreath of lilies pale,  
Placed on my heart the grief of yester-year.

## THE DEFENDERS

L EAVE me my dreams, and I shall not repine;  
L Youth's eager hours, love's restless holiday.  
Leave me my dreams, a castled garden mine—  
Where all unchid my wand'ring feet can stray.

Leave me my dreams, the foe is at my door,  
Time's swinging scythe, and disappointed years.  
Leave me my dreams, and they can yet restore  
The crumbling walls, where crouch invading fears.

Leave me my dreams, nor can rude sorrow break  
Into my fortress where content I go.  
Leave me my dreams, and who dare combat make  
On Youth's sweet hours, or lay Hope's castle low?

## A SONG FOR EVALEEN

SING a song for Evaleen, only two years old,  
 Running laughing on life's path in her wilful way ;  
 Christ-Child, Whom on Mary's knee her loving arms enfold,  
 Let Thy little angels come with this babe to play.

One to guide her either hand, so what deed it do,  
 It shall neither give nor take grievous hurt or pain ;  
 Let these little fingers pull blossoms fair and true  
 For the glory of Thy feet, without thorn or stain.

One to whisper songs of joy in her listening ear,  
 So the sad world's bitter cries reach her but afar ;  
 So that evil, on his way, finds no welcome here,  
 Let but white words come to her where Thy angels are.

One to guard her dimpled mouth, laughing in its glee,  
 So it say no cruel words, nor let anger call ;  
 Let it make for all who hear golden melody,  
 So it raise some stricken heart where the tune may fall.

One to keep her baby eyes from despair and tears,  
Let them find the lovely things of thy wondrous ways;  
So they grow not dull with grief or too bright with fears—  
Let them see but splendid deeds meriting Thy praise.

One to guide her wilful feet lest they lose the way  
On their perilous woman's path, where such dangers be;  
Guide her little baby feet so they never stray  
Far from where Thou art a Child held on Mary's knee.

One to bless her every deed, every thought new-born,  
Bless her in the summer-time and in the winter's cold,  
Bless her in the dark of night and in the dawn of morn,  
This a song for Evaleen, only two years old.

## THE COMFORTERS

**W**HEN I crept over the hill, broken with tears.  
 When I crouched down on the grass, dumb in  
 despair,

I heard the soft croon of the wind bend to my ears,  
 I felt the light kiss of the wind touching my hair.

When I stood lone on the height my sorrow did speak,  
 As I went down the hill, I cried and I cried,  
 The soft little hands of the rain stroking my cheek,  
 The kind little feet of the rain ran by my side.

When I went to thy grave, broken with tears,  
 When I crouched down in the grass, dumb in despair,  
 I heard the sweet croon of the wind soft in my ears,  
 I felt the kind lips of the wind touching my hair.

When I stood lone by thy cross, sorrow did speak.  
 When I went down the long hill, I cried and I cried.  
 The soft little hands of the rain stroked my pale cheek,  
 The kind little feet of the rain ran by my side.

## THE BLACK HORSEMAN

LIFT me up from this bed of sickness;

L I am going out to meet the summer.

I will run into the arms of Sunshine

And be so comforted, the first new-comer.

"I will lift you up," said the black horseman.

I shall climb over the lone hill-tops,

I shall sail unto the far places,

Eat of wheaten bread and the wild honey,

See the dark eyes of Eastern races.

"You shall come with me," said the black horseman.

Lay me down on my bed of dreaming.

It is best, for am I not too weary

Walking the white wide roads about the world?

Here night is not too long, nor day too dreary.

"Do you not fear me?" said the black horseman.

Why should I fear when there are friends before me?  
I grow old who used to roam enraptured,  
Yet I am young for even more exploring,  
Whose day is o'er and each wild joy is captured.  
"I am the best adventure," smiled the black horseman.

## ON THE OTHER SIDE

WHAT will you do through the waiting days,  
 What will my darling do?

Will you sleep, or wander in those strange ways  
 Until I can come to you?

Do you cry at the door as I cry here,  
 Death's door that lies between?

Do you plead in vain for my love, my dear,  
 As you stand by my side unseen?

Who will comfort your difficult ways  
 That were hard to understand,

When I who knew you through all your days,  
 Can give you no helping hand?

When I who loved you no word can speak,  
 Though your ghost should cry to me,  
 Can give no help, though my heart should break  
 At the thought of your agony.

You were shy of strangers—and who will come  
As you stand there lone and new,  
Through the long years when my lips are dumb  
•What will my darling do?

## THE HOUSE OF CARDS

O THE chatter, chatter, chatter,  
Of the things that do not matter.  
Little wordy things that clatter,  
Restless feet that pitter patter,  
All my pretty houses scatter,  
All my noble castles scatter.

See I build it tower by tower,  
Kingly hall and queenly bower,  
Into skies celestial throwing,  
Spire and turret upward growing,  
Prisoned sunshine for its lighting,  
Rainbow beams its roof uniting.  
Kings and queens and noble people  
Look from turret, peep from steeple,  
With a handsome knave or two  
All the fairy ways pursue.

But the clatter, clatter, clatter,  
Of the things that do not matter,

## THE HOUSE OF CARDS

71

All the talk of dining, wining,  
Discontented people whining,  
All my pretty houses scatter  
All my noble castles scatter.

See from out yon casement shady,  
Leans a fair and lovely lady.  
Gems and jewels flashing, gleaming.  
'Tis the queen of diamonds dreaming.  
She is sad and somewhat lonely,  
All she lost in loving only  
Riches, games were all her passion,  
She is mourning in her fashion.  
See, she leans, her casement gracing,  
Watching yonder dark king pacing  
Up and down the paths beneath her.  
Does she dream he 'll kneel, entreat her  
Into love with serenading,  
At her coldness stay upbraiding?  
Ah, she wots not he is sighing,  
Only is his fond heart sighing  
For dark eyes and nut-brown tresses.  
'Tis not she his love-thought blesseſ.

## THE HOUSE OF CARDS

Oh, the chatter, chatter, chatter,  
Of the things that never matter.  
Of the tongues that rage or flatter  
And the countless feet that clatter  
With their noisy pitter patter,  
Till my castles all they scatter  
All my pretty houses scatter.

See yon splendid pageant forming,  
To the gates the draw-bridge storming.  
Yonder come in kingly passion  
Lords and knights in war-like fashion.  
See the black-browed monarch going,  
Drums a-rolling, trumpets blowing,  
Clash of sword and armour's rattle  
He so full of rage and battle  
For a mad-cap princess hiding  
In some secret nook deriding  
All his wild and fierce pursuing,  
All his dark and despot wooing.

But they must not in their passion,  
Break my song in such a fashion,

Make no discord in my singing,  
That dream song that goes a-ringing  
Through the chambers of my houses,  
See the clash of war arouses,  
He the greatest king who, reigning,  
Rules in this dear land of feigning,  
King of hearts, he leads his lady  
Down the pleasant rue path shady,  
Down to greet the dark-browed lover,  
Help his mad-cap queen discover.  
And I hear from roof to rafter  
Naught but song and fairy laughter.

Till the chatter, chatter, chatter,  
Comes of things that do not matter;  
Much ado of wining, dining,  
Dismal voices whining, pining.  
Restless feet that pitter, patter,  
All my pleasant castles scatter.  
All my happy houses scatter.

## THE PALACE GATE

"HALT, who goes there?" "Tis for the new-born king,  
 In long processions see what gifts we bring.  
 Here cometh Care with sheaf of troubled years,  
 And here is Grief with dish of women's tears.  
 Frail Glory, too, holds out her heavy crown,  
 And Joy comes pale with merry eyes cast down,  
 Sweet Love drags slow by passion's eager feet  
 To make alarm into a swift retreat,  
 Here Marriage leads the law-selected wife,  
 And yonder Death with the assassin's knife."

And as they stood before the palace gate,  
 Now all disturbed to wonder and to wait.  
 A little ghost from out the palace ran  
 And through the crowd to force his way began,  
 Their mourning garments beat about his face.  
 He thrust black Care and Glory from their place,  
 Love took one hand, the other held by Joy,  
 Who ran to safety with the pretty boy.

Then soon from far came laughter strangely sweet  
And on the floor of Heaven running feet.

The soldier closed the clanging palace gate  
Upon the crowd who murmured still to wait.  
"Take back your gifts, you may not pass," he said.  
"Hear the bell toll—the little king is dead."

## AN OLD PROVERB

*"It will be all the same in a thousand years."*

AND in a thousand years  
It will be all the same,  
Whether or no  
Women's tears flow,  
Or battles take us  
To save or to break us,  
Or man against man  
Advance but a span;  
Hideous in anger,  
Tame in death's languor,  
Shouting and crying,  
Sobbing and dying,  
On the red fields of war;  
Calling on those afar,  
Mother and child and wife  
There in the midst of strife.

God, the earth shakes with it!  
Down in the hellish pit,  
Where the red river ran,  
Hatred of man to man;  
Maddened they rush to kill,  
That but their single will;  
Strangle or bayonet him!  
Trample him life and limb  
Into the awful mire;  
Break him with knife or fire!  
So that we know he lie  
Dead to the smiling sky.

And in a thousand years  
It will be all the same.  
Which of us was to blame?  
What will it matter then?  
Over the sleeping men  
Grass will so softly grow  
No one would ever know  
Of the dark crimson stain,  
Of all the hate and pain  
That once had fearful birth  
In the black secret earth.

## AN OLD PROVERB

Ah! in a thousand years  
Time will forget our tears.  
Babes in their golden hour  
Seeking some hidden flower  
Will, in those years afar,  
Play on the fields of war;  
And as they laughing roam  
Mothers will call them home;  
Laden with fruit and flower  
Run they at twilight hour.  
Cattle will, lowing, stray,  
Little lambs frisk and play,  
Birds nest in hedge and tree  
All in Time's victory.

Dark o' night, dawn o' day,  
Dark o' night, dawn o' day.  
Thus in a thousand years  
Time will forget our tears,  
And the lost fields of war.  
In the good years afar  
When the lads silent lie,  
When women's tears are dry.  
All the wives comforted,

All the maid's grief is shed,  
Crying babes safe and still  
Sleeping in vale and hill,  
Sobbing of men is mute,  
And scream of dying brute,  
On the red fields of war,  
In those good years afar.  
  
Only the waving grass,  
Where the shy children pass  
Seeking the hidden flower,  
Glad in their golden hour,  
And as they laughing roam  
Mothers will call them home,  
Laden with fruit or flower  
Run they at twilight hour.

Over the meadow grass  
Slow the moon's shadows pass.  
Only the chirp of bird  
From the deep hedge is heard.  
This in a thousand years  
Payment of blood and tears,  
Horrors we dare not name,  
It will be all the same.

## AN OLD PROVERB

What is the value then  
To all those sleeping men?  
It will be all the same,  
Passion and grief and blame.  
This in the years to be,  
My God, the tragedy!

# What Poets have said of Dora Sigerson's Poetry

## GEORGE MEREDITH

"Her little book made me a juvenile, finding the eternal poet in that wise creature. . . . She is one of the few who can tell a tale in verse."—*Correspondence*, Vol. II.

## A. C. SWINBURNE

"Dora Sigerson's Poems, which I hope you admire as much as I do" (to Lady Ritchie).—*Correspondence*, Vol. II.

## FRANCIS THOMPSON

"In this volume her ballads seem often to touch a deeper and more poignant feeling . . . the unconsciousness of the child, contrasted with the sorrow of its earthly lot—this is a familiar theme, yet Miss Sigerson handles it with unfamiliar freshness and power. . . . This volume extends our idea of her power."—*The Academy*, January 16, 1904.

## THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

"I think 'Madge Linsey' one of the best poems that has come from Miss Sigerson's pen. She has the rare poetic quality of *naïveté*, a quality which almost no modern poet, except Coleridge, has secured."—*Correspondence*.

## LORD LATYMER (FRANCIS COUTTS)

"Comes with that thrill of surprise which is one of the rarest and most delicate pleasures of poetry. . . . There is freshness and life about all her work."—*The Times*.

## EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

"Can you tell me anything of Dora Sigerson, author of the enclosed conjuring little ballad?"—*Life*, Vol. II, p. 200.

## JOHN MASEFIELD

"Dora Sigerson has written one of the most beautiful poems of the last decade, 'Can Dulh Deelish.' Her poetry is innocent and delicate, full of gentle things."—*Daily News*, February 26, 1904.

## KATHERINE TYNAN

"She has the freshness of imagination of her country, with something individual added; something of thought and tenderness for all created things."—*The Bookman*, December 1897.

## LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

"As regards Dora Sigerson, if we were in the mood to prophesy we should be inclined to say that our sons will forget her, but that our grandsons will rediscover her with surprise and delight."—*The Nation*.



CHISWICK PRESS : CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.  
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

